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# Ghanaian's spy trial postponed at hearing

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The trial of a Ghanaian accused of espionage was postponed yesterday after defense attorneys and prosecutors met to discuss classified matters during a closed-court hearing attended by the ambassador from the West African nation.

The 20-minute hearing in U.S. District Court in Alexandria came the day before Michael A. Soussoudis was to be tried on charges that he obtained classified information from a former CIA clerk who became his lover after she was stationed in Ghana.

Defense attorneys and prosecutors would not say what was discussed before Judge Claude M. Hilton, but they said the case has been continued until December.

Attorney Plato Cacheris said his client, Mr. Soussoudis, did not plead guilty to espionage charges during the closed hearing and that no plea agreement was reached between Mr. Soussoudis and the government.

Mr. Cacheris said the hearing involved classified matters, but declined further comment. "I cannot discuss it," he said.

The government has alleged that Mr. Soussoudis, a cousin of Ghanaian leader Flight Lt. Jerry Rawlings, is an intelligence officer for his country who received classified CIA information from Sharon M. Scranage after she was assigned to the CIA station in Accra, Ghana.

Ms. Scranage, of King George, Va., has pleaded guilty to a charge of giving classified information to Mr. Soussoudis and has agreed to testify against him.

Yesterday, Mr. Soussoudis was accompanied by Ghanaian Ambassador Eric Otoo and four embassy aides as he was escorted by U.S. marshals into a third-floor courtroom.

Marshals then locked the courtroom doors, barring reporters.

U.S. Attorney Elsie Munsell said the hearing was closed under the Classified Information Procedures Act to prevent a breach of national security, but refused further comment.

Embassy officials declined to discuss the continuance of Mr. Soussoudis' trial or the reason for Mr. Otoo's appearance at the closed hearing.

"It is a very, very sensitive matter," said an embassy aide.

According to a Justice Department source who asked not to be identified, the closed hearing has led to speculation that the United States and Ghana are attempting to resolve Mr. Soussoudis' case through diplomatic channels.

Attorneys for Mr. Soussoudis have argued that the United States cannot prosecute a foreigner for alleged acts committed in another country, and that his arrest in June was an attempt to prevent Ghana from pursuing normal counterintelligence activity.